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Fifty-first Session

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Friday, 27 September 1996, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Razali Ismail . . . . . (Malaysia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Kamal (Pakistan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The Acting President: The first speaker this afternoon is the Minister of State of New Zealand, His Excellency Sir Robin Gray.

Sir Robin Gray (New Zealand): It gives me particular pleasure to address the General Assembly at a session of over which Malaysia has been elected to preside. Our two countries are good friends, and Ambassador Razali is personally known to and respected by us all. New Zealand looks forward to a productive session under his leadership.

In just two weeks New Zealanders face a general election. There are many subjects over which the various political parties differ, but one thing remains quite clear: the support of New Zealanders for the United Nations and the rule of international law embodied in it.

For New Zealand, as for many other countries represented here today — and especially smaller countries — the primary purpose of the United Nations remains to provide for a system of collective security. It brings the nations of the world together in a grand coalition to keep the peace, to help eliminate weapons of mass destruction, to uphold human rights, to encourage good governance, to protect the environment and to promote economic and social development, including by supporting the role of women.

Together, these activities, along with national and regional initiatives, provide the underpinnings of the system of collective security that we want to leave for our children.

For New Zealanders, our confidence in the United Nations was reaffirmed when, two weeks ago, the General Assembly adopted the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. It gave me much satisfaction to sign the Treaty earlier today on behalf of the Government and the people of New Zealand. Agreement on a test ban has been a New Zealand objective for more than three decades and one we promoted in this Assembly, together with Australia and Mexico. It reflects deeply held convictions on the part of all New Zealanders.

New Zealand has argued, and will continue to argue, for a world without nuclear weapons. Our belief that these weapons of mass destruction can and should be eliminated has been reinforced by the experiences of our region as a testing ground for nuclear weapons. I am glad to say it is an era now happily behind us.

For New Zealand, the Treaty represents first of all an end to nuclear testing in our region and worldwide. But even more, it puts real obstacles in the way of any

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State seeking to refine or develop a nuclear arsenal. We have taken a significant step on the way to eliminating nuclear weapons entirely. Now, however, we must look ahead.

The International Court of Justice, in its recent Advisory Opinion on the legality of the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, set out our obligation in this regard: the obligation to pursue in good faith and to bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament. New Zealand believes that in 1997 all States, including nuclear-weapon States, should pursue negotiations on a phased programme of nuclear disarmament, with the ultimate goals of the complete elimination of nuclear weapons and a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.

We are better placed to make our contribution to such negotiations because of the recent decision of the Conference on Disarmament to admit New Zealand and 22 other countries as full members. As a reflection of the importance we attach to its ongoing work, my Government has now decided to appoint a full-time Disarmament Ambassador to the Conference in Geneva.

Further steps towards a nuclear-free world are recommended in the report of the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, released last month. We hope that report will energize discussions at the national level, particularly in the nuclear-weapon States.

The aspirations of many States to be free of nuclear weapons have found expression in the establishment of what are now four nuclear-weapon-free zones. Taken together, the four relevant treaties have the potential to cover some 114 nations and 1.7 billion people. My Government has given considerable thought to ways in which cooperation between nuclear-weapon-free zones can be advanced. We are working with other Governments on a draft resolution to be submitted to the Assembly at this session, and New Zealand hopes it will receive wide support.

The disarmament arena is only one where the United Nations must continue to address serious challenges to our collective security. When my Government took office in October 1990, the international community faced the challenge presented by Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. In the heart of Europe, Yugoslavia was on the path to political disintegration. Few of us imagined then, however, the nightmare of Bosnia, the genocide to come in Rwanda or the mass starvation and anarchy in Somalia. In response, during our term on the Security Council in 1993 and 1994, a record 75,000 United Nations peacekeepers were deployed around the world, and Iraq's invasion of Kuwait was robustly countered by coalition action authorized by the Security Council. New Zealand was part of that coalition and is part of the current efforts to ensure that Iraq complies with subsequent Council decisions. Recent events show that we still need to be vigilant. Iraq must recognize that there are limits to what the international community will tolerate.

New Zealanders also serve in the former Yugoslavia where, while the implementation of the Dayton accords lies primarily with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the United Nations continues to play an important role. Similarly, our personnel serve in Angola and the Middle East.

New Zealanders are staunch supporters of the United Nations role in international peacekeeping, despite the fact that the overall record through the first half of this decade has been mixed. There were successes, such as Cambodia, Mozambique and El Salvador, and there were the disappointments and bitter frustrations of Bosnia, Somalia and Rwanda. I hesitate to call those operations failures. To me, that would be to overlook the positive things they achieved in extremely difficult circumstances and the contributions made by so many dedicated and able people. Those operations will be failures only if we fail to learn from them. I think we have learned.

We have learned that, first, the United Nations must be given the resources required to do the job. Secondly, the Organization must be careful about mixing enforcement tasks with peacekeeping, unless our peacekeepers are appropriately configured from the outset for the higher level of threat.

Thirdly, the Security Council should be wary of adopting resolutions to which the Organization cannot give effect. This creates a very corrosive credibility problem.

My Government also considers that the United Nations must continue its efforts to develop a capacity to respond more rapidly. We commend the proposal to establish a rapidly deployable operational headquarters team and, indeed, have offered to contribute a highly experienced officer to it.

Demining remains an important focus for New Zealand. Mines pose an unacceptable threat to peacekeeping operations and are a longer-term humanitarian and development challenge. The United Nations must make every effort to ensure that the necessary resources are available for demining activities.

We have more than doubled our annual instalment to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance. This is in addition to our continuing contribution of expertise in demining in Cambodia, Mozambique and Angola, as well as here at United Nations Headquarters.

Finally, we do not think the United Nations can write itself out of the script when operations involving a potential enforcement dimension are contemplated. If it did so, it could quickly become irrelevant. The threats to international peace and security in the future are likely to be every bit as difficult as those of the recent past. The United Nations will need to be able to respond effectively, not simply as a rubber stamp for great-Power actions.

The tragic events of recent days in the West Bank and Gaza show that peace there remains elusive. New Zealand calls upon all parties to desist from actions that might derail the Middle East peace process. Painstaking efforts have gone into that process, and it offers a real hope for a long-term solution to the problems that have bedeviled that region. It must be supported and not jeopardized.

Human rights are the foundation of freedom and justice, and the achievement of universal respect for human rights is an essential prerequisite for international peace and security.

In New Zealand we work hard to ensure that our own house is in order. We are committed to ensuring that the rights elaborated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Covenants and other core human rights instruments are a living reality for all New Zealanders, and we are prepared to speak out when we see human rights being violated in other parts of the world. At its heart, our international human rights policy is geared to finding tangible ways of protecting and promoting human rights and good government.

In the Asia-Pacific region we are pleased by the progress the United Nations is making in nurturing human rights frameworks. We are also encouraged by the new levels of cooperation and interaction being achieved by the human rights commissions of the region.

New Zealand also sees a need to support individual countries, international and regional organizations and non-governmental organizations in their work to improve human rights and the quality of governance. To this end the Minister for Foreign Affairs has today announced the establishment of an international good-government programme. This new programme will markedly expand our ability to support good government and human rights capacity-building activities. It will work in tandem with the existing Commonwealth Good Government Fund.

Consistent with United Nations principles, New Zealand has also participated actively in the Action Group of Commonwealth Ministers for the promotion of principles of good governance established at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting at Harare in 1991 and reaffirmed at its Auckland meeting in 1995. For my own part, I have been privileged to represent New Zealand at several of the Action Group's meetings and during its recent mission to Gambia.

Such programmes, with the interlinked goals of social progress and economic development, do not come cheaply. The money spent on United Nations relief and development greatly surpasses that spent on peacekeeping, and so it should.

At the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 it was recognized that substantial new and additional funding would be required for sustainable development and the implementation of Agenda 21, the programme of action that will take us into the next century.

I am pleased to be able to say that by next year New Zealand will have increased its official development assistance by almost one third since Rio. There will be a 24 per cent increase in our funding for United Nations development agencies this year.

1997 will see the five-year review of Agenda 21. At the special session of the General Assembly next June, one important task will be to assess the effectiveness of the bodies and institutions that have been established to advance the aims set out in Agenda 21. The issues are many, and all are important. But we need to focus efforts and produce real results.

In this regard, the Commission on Sustainable Development should have a strengthened role. It should be the forum in which States can work to streamline the environment-and-sustainable- development agenda.

All these challenges facing this unique Organization, and our regard for it, highlight of course the urgent need for reform. In particular, the Security Council must be made more representative of the Organization's membership as it is today, not as it was 50 years ago. Its decision-making procedures must be brought up to date.

Finding a sustainable basis for the financing of the Organization remains long overdue. New Zealand has dedicated itself to reform of both the Secretariat and the intergovernmental machinery, not least through our vigorous commitment to the work of the Open-ended High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System. The report of that group provides a blueprint for action during this session. We also support the Efficiency Board, and have made available to it the services of a New Zealand expert in public-service restructuring.

We believe that New Zealand's record, not only as a prompt contributor of assessments, but also as a country that has demonstrated its commitment to financial reform, places it in a good position to make an effective contribution to the work of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, in which we are seeking membership at this year's session of the General Assembly.

The drive for reform of the United Nations system to make it an effective instrument of the international community for the next 50 years means no part of it can remain immune from scrutiny.

A good deal of attention has been focused on the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Secretariat. We believe there is also scope for increasing the effectiveness of the International Court of Justice. It is 50 years since the ICJ was established as the principal United Nations judicial organ. To mark this important milestone in the international rule of law, we should now finally schedule a conference to adopt the statute for the international criminal court. The creation of a permanent court that will bring justice to victims of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and other serious international crimes is surely a priority for us all.

I am grateful to have had this opportunity to reaffirm New Zealand's commitment to this Organization, and to multilateralism, as the means for building a better world.

The Acting President: The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece, His Excellency Mr. Theodoros Pangalos, on whom I now call.

Mr. Pangalos (Greece): Allow me to extend the warmest congratulations of my Government to the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session on his election. I would also like to express our deep appreciation to his predecessor, Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, whose leadership during the fiftieth session was a valuable asset for the Organization.

I also seize this opportunity to express my deep appreciation to the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for his dedication to his duties since 1992.

The Foreign Minister of Ireland, as President of the Council of the European Union, delivered a statement to which my Government fully subscribes, as it does to the Union's memorandum. I would like, however, to elaborate further on some issues that are of particular interest to my country.

Let us remember the message delivered by the world leaders during the special commemorative meeting of this body: the Organization needs to undergo a serious reorganization in order to be ready to confront the challenges of the years ahead. The political commitment of the Member States and the contribution of adequate resources constitute two fundamental prerequisites for the success of the United Nations.

Unfortunately, few noteworthy proposals have been put forward concerning the comprehensive modernization effort to enable the Organization to become more efficient and transparent in the fulfilment of its functions while rationalizing the use of its resources.

It is the Member States that have endowed the United Nations with its current features. Even if the Organization's administrative weaknesses were fully remedied, the power of extensive correction and long-overdue reform lies not in this building, but in our own capitals.

At this stage, we are faced with two alternatives: either curtail demands on the United Nations, giving it a reasonable chance of carrying out reduced policies within its existing resources, or recognize the need to improve its capacities and grant it greater functions, as well as the necessary means. Greece strongly advocates the second path, because the need for the world Organization is

growing, not shrinking. Year by year, we move closer to menacing demographic, socio-economic and ecological thresholds. The only chance we have to deal with transnational problems is to work out transnational responses. We need to cooperate constructively towards common ends.

It would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, for the United Nations to face the current financial crisis if Member States were to deprive the world Organization of the resources and assets that they have contractually pledged of their own free will. In this context, it should be stressed yet again that no amount of savings will, by itself, permit the United Nations to be solvent, and that none of the Member States, in particular those that play a major role in the Organization's decision-making process and in the definition of its activities, should have second thoughts when it comes to footing their part of the bill.

Let us be clear: the whole reform is endangered by the looming atmosphere of imminent financial collapse. Even worse, the United Nations, and all the principles that it stands for, are exposed to the danger of being discredited, perhaps forever, even in the eyes of its warmest supporters. This is a much more fundamental issue than improvements to specific parts of the system, welcome and needed though the latter may be.

Earlier this year, the European Union outlined a comprehensive package to address the financial crisis. Furthermore, Greece, on a national basis, responded positively to the Secretary-General's appeal and decided to increase its annual contribution to the peacekeeping-operations budget, thus moving on a voluntary basis from Group C to Group B of countries that contribute to the financing of the Organization's peacekeeping activities. As a result, our contribution will increase by 500 per cent by the year 2000, when the process of gradual reallocation will have been completed.

It has become increasingly fashionable to argue that the idea of a world community is alive in the human imagination, though not yet in the world of action; that the concept of collective security has failed to take root because it does not reflect the spirit of the age; that the public multilateral approach cannot be effective in conflict resolution, because there are no collective solutions to individual crises; and that behind-the-scenes diplomacy, which pursues relatively modest goals, will always be better at keeping conflict within reasonable limits, because it will compromise between what justice demands and what circumstances permit.

In the light of past and recent experience, the Greek people certainly do not have immoderate illusions in this regard. The case of Cyprus is a striking example of the inability of the international community to ensure implementation of clear-cut United Nations resolutions and to tackle the problem of the ongoing occupation of one Member State by another following an act of military aggression. To cite just one other example, Greece is threatened with war in the event it applies the provisions of the Convention on the Law of the Sea, which has been signed by all Member States, except for the one that made it clear that it would not hesitate to use force for the maintenance and defence of its vital interests.

However, it would be totally wrong to discard multilateralism just because of the persistence of attitudes that assuage consciences without solving the problems. We have to strike a positive balance between vision and reality, because no society, and certainly not the international community, can aspire to human, economic and social development without a stable and legally appropriate framework.

Throughout its existence, the United Nations has not just constituted the main, if not the only, incarnation of the global spirit of hope. The principles enshrined in its Charter have established a code of conduct for States, which have the duty to contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security, to refrain from the threat or use of force, and to settle disputes by exclusively peaceful means and in accordance with international law. Moreover, the Organization itself has often been a successful instrument for the prevention and management of conflicts.

If power politics are allowed to be deployed in the pursuit of exclusive and narrow interests in a climate of confrontation, if the world's resources are shared on the basis of military power rather than of international treaties and conventions, if priority is not given to international law and international cooperation, and if we attempt to evade the responsibilities that we have all undertaken under the Charter, however appealing and convenient that might appear in the short term, we will sow the seeds of chaos, anarchy and rapid disintegration. The United Nations offers the only framework in which to achieve the important objective of enforcing international legitimacy, provided, of course, that it improves its capacity to deal with international problems and especially to create an effective mechanism of collective security.

Greek-Turkish relations illustrate the need for such an improvement. The Greek Government sincerely desires the establishment of normal good-neighbourly relations based on the principles of international law and respect for international treaties, which, however, Turkey seems determined to ignore. The Turkish Parliament unanimously adopted a resolution on 8 June 1995, which empowers the Government to use military force in case Greece exercises its legal right to extend its territorial waters in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Moreover, the Turkish Government adopted the contents of this resolution in direct violation of the United Nations Charter, which forbids the use of force or the threat of the use of force in international relations.

Even worse, in contravention of the Treaty of Lausanne and the Treaty of Paris, Turkey laid claim at the beginning of this year to the Imia islets in the Aegean Sea, which are Greek sovereign territory, and even supported this claim by military means. This sets a very dangerous precedent for the entire region. Turkey is attempting to subvert the territorial status quo established more than 70 years ago and is backing its claims with the use of armed force. Furthermore, the Foreign Minister, Mrs. Ciller, in her capacity as Prime Minister, claimed in February that 1,000 Greek islands and islets in the Aegean are Turkish, and that if Greece attempted to contest this "fact", Turkey would consider it a *casus belli*. A few days later she raised the number to 3,000.

Greece has repeatedly called on Turkey to have recourse to the International Court of Justice concerning the Imia islets. Turkey, on the contrary, has lately challenged Greek sovereignty, even over the inhabited island of Gávdhos, south-west of Crete in the Libyan Sea, and despite the outrageous nature of this claim, it has not unequivocally withdrawn it.

We see that Turkey wilfully violates the most basic principles of the international legal order and far from exhibiting any self-restraint, puts forth ever more provocative claims against Greece. My country, on the other hand, not only scrupulously respects international law and treaties, but also demonstrates great self-restraint in its relations with Turkey. There is no better example of this than the fact that Greece has chosen not to react forcibly to the massive violations of Greek airspace and the constant overflying of Greek territory on the part of Turkish warplanes. This responsible stance should not, however, be misinterpreted in any way. On the contrary, and despite the absence of any real will on the part of international community to uphold the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter, Greece is absolutely determined to protect its sovereign rights by all legitimate means, and the threat of force will not dissuade it from doing so.

As to the Cyprus issue, it is widely admitted that the status quo is unacceptable. Nevertheless, no progress has been achieved in the course of the last 22 years. Turkey, provocatively defying consecutive Security Council resolutions is still occupying by force a considerable part of the island. At the same time, Turkey is flagrantly violating basic human rights and freedoms of the Cypriot people, while engaging in systematic plunder of the island's cultural and religious heritage. Moreover, Turkey continues to systematically promote the illegal and condemned practice of establishing settlers on the island.

The time has come to reach a just and viable solution to the Cyprus problem based on the relevant United Nations resolutions and providing for a bicommunal bizonal federation with a single sovereignty and international personality and a single citizenship, while safeguarding the independence and territorial integrity of the Republic of Cyprus.

The prospect of Cyprus joining the European Union is indeed an important new development, which creates conditions that should facilitate a comprehensive settlement of the issue. The period until the start of the accession talks should in no way be left unexploited. At the same time, the Greek Government welcomes any new ideas and initiatives, whatever their origin may be, which would contribute to a solution within the framework of the United Nations resolutions. A basic factor for achieving a breakthrough, in our opinion, is the coordination of all initiatives by the Secretary-General and his Special Representative.

Meanwhile, the tension lingering on the island involves serious risks and creates additional complications which render the efforts for a settlement more arduous. Turkey and the pseudo-state, taking advantage of a peaceful demonstration by Greek Cypriots, proceeded a few weeks ago, with the active involvement of the extremist terrorist Turkish group the Grey Wolves, to implement a meticulously prepared plan which was crowned by the murder in cold blood of two young Cypriots and the injuries sustained by many others, United Nations peacekeepers included.

The aim was undoubtedly to demonstrate the existence of an alleged international boundary on the

island. It was also to support the Turkish claim that the two communities cannot live peacefully side by side and that the presence of the Turkish occupation forces is therefore necessary for the protection of the Turkish Cypriot community. But the truth is that both communities can indeed coexist peacefully. So it was felt necessary to call in extremist elements from mainland Turkey in order to implement this scenario and to try to create mistrust between the communities.

In the wake of those recent tragic developments we steadfastly believe that the adoption of President Clerides' proposal for the demilitarization of Cyprus, a proposal whose importance has already been widely acknowledged, will decisively contribute to defusing tension and will at the same time meet the security requirements of all communities living on the island.

In a broader context, the search for a just and viable solution to this complex international problem requires decisiveness and perseverance. If the bicommunal dialogue is to have any chance of success, a minimum common ground is indispensable, based on the relevant United Nations resolutions. But if the other party does not show the necessary political will, the international community should at last live up to its political and moral responsibilities. It should take action without delay and try to convince Turkey to abide by international law and withdraw its troops from the island.

With regard to the Balkans, Greece's policy in the area is guided by the principles of the maintenance of stability, peace and security, the inviolability of internationally recognized borders and full respect for human rights, including those relating to national minorities, in accordance with the relevant principles of the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Greece supports the establishment of good-neighbourly relations and the development of close economic ties with and among all Balkan countries. At the same time, our systematic cooperation with the countries of the Balkan peninsula contributes to the achievement of their long-term goals of economic and political rapprochement with the European Union and its institutions. We fully support and actively promote the European orientation of these countries.

Moreover, Greece has supported all international initiatives aimed at further promoting Balkan regional cooperation, such as the conference of ministers of southeastern Europe — which convened this year in Sofia and which will meet again in Thessaloniki in June of next year — the European Royaumont initiative and the United States southeast European cooperative initiative. We believe that in their complementarity, these efforts contribute to the stability, security and prosperity of the area.

In the context of regional cooperation I should also mention the Greek initiative for trilateral meetings of the ministers for foreign affairs of Greece, Bulgaria and Romania, which took place at Ioannina, Greece in 1995, and, after that, in Varna, Bulgaria, on 16 and 17 March 1996. The aim of these meetings is to bolster subregional cooperation, mainly in the fields of transport, telecommunications and energy, as well as in the development of infrastructure.

Greece was one of the founding members of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) organization. Greece recently became a member of the Parliamentarian Assembly of the BSEC and participates actively in this initiative that encompasses countries from both the Balkans and the Black Sea area and which can make an important contribution to the development and stability of the wider region. One important achievement among others is the establishment in Thessaloniki of the BSEC Bank of Trade and Development which, is expected to start functioning soon and contribute to the implementation of specific projects of great interest to the region.

I will now try to give a brief assessment of my country's bilateral relations with each individual Balkan country.

In its relations with Albania, Greece actively pursues the development of good-neighbourliness and cooperation in all fields, based on the respect of sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as full respect for human rights, including those relating to national minorities, in accordance with the principles of the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

The Greek minority in Albania constitutes a bridge of friendship and cooperation between the two countries. To this end, encouraging steps are being undertaken by the Albanian Government. Greece has actively supported Albania in its efforts for reconstruction and development and has backed its association with international organizations. The visit last March of the President of the Hellenic Republic to Tirana and the signing of a treaty of friendship and cooperation between the two countries

opened a new chapter in their relations for the benefit of the two peoples.

Greek-Bulgarian relations have continued their fruitful and constructive development marked by exchanges of visits at all levels. Recent crucially important agreements — among them one concerning the opening of three new border check-points and another on the waters of the Nestos river — give true meaning to their cooperation in the field of infrastructure, while being of decisive significance for the future development of the region's European orientation.

Greece's relations with Romania have reached a high level during the last years. Visits at all levels, including one by the President of the Hellenic Republic, have taken place frequently and close and broad cooperation in the economic and cultural fields has been achieved.

Greece's goal is the establishment of close and friendly relations with all countries that have emerged from the former Yugoslavia. The traditionally close relations of Greece with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia will be further strengthened through enhanced economic cooperation, especially following the suspension of the United Nations embargo, which inflicted heavy losses on the Greek economy also. A multi-faceted development of their cooperation will help to redress the past.

Mr. Erwa (Sudan), Vice-President took the Chair.

Greece's relations with Croatia and Slovenia have followed a steady upward trend. Greece has a great interest in the dynamic development of its relations with those two countries in all fields, and I am glad to acknowledge their positive response as well. With regard to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Greece fully supported the Dayton Peace Agreement and has actively participated in the efforts to implement it fully. Timely and full respect of this Agreement is the best guarantee of the preservation of the integrity, sovereignty and multiethnic character of that Republic. The efforts of the international community to achieve peace in Bosnia must succeed. First must come the constitution and proper functioning of the joint organs of the Republic in order to expedite the return to full normalization of life in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Greece has established diplomatic relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina and participates in reconstruction plans with substantial economic aid.

Greece expresses the wish that negotiations taking place with The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia under the auspices of Mr. Vance on the issue of the name of that Republic will finally meet with success, so as to open the way for a full normalization and the dynamic development of relations between our two countries.

The Middle East peace process is currently at a critical crossroads. It is with shock and dismay that my Government is following the latest dramatic developments in the West Bank and Gaza. We express our deepest sorrow at the deaths that have occurred and our grave concern about the future of the peace process. Greece urges all parties to demonstrate the utmost restraint and to refrain from any action which might lead to a further escalation of violence in the occupied territories. In particular, they must step back from any action that is bound to rekindle deep-rooted sentiments of mistrust and enmity on both sides.

There is no alternative for the peoples in the region other than a peace based on the principle of land for peace. There is no alternative to the peace process. If this process stagnates, there is a danger that it will unravel. There is an urgency for both parties to resume efforts to fulfil earnestly their agreed obligations. Greece calls on the parties to resume negotiations immediately on the basis of the principles already accepted by them in the Madrid and Oslo agreements. We consider it of the utmost importance that the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement be fully implemented, and that the talks on the final status of the Palestinian territories — including Jerusalem — are speedily concluded together with the solution of the two outstanding problems, namely, security for all and social and economic development.

Failure to proceed could lead to grave consequences as far as peace and stability in the whole region are concerned. Peoples of the region should be guaranteed a secure life within internationally recognized and safe boundaries. In this context, Greece believes that the international community must spare no effort to create a solid basis for the political and economic survival of the Palestinian National Authority, thereby providing a source of hope for the Palestinian people. Greece will continue to support this effort actively. We are of the view that the peace process could be substantially promoted if those States of the region which are directly concerned would join forces with those actively participating in it. We urge the implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978) on Lebanon. Greece, who has actively participated in the Middle East peace process since its beginnings in Madrid, will continue to offer every possible support and assistance to

the bilateral and multilateral negotiations towards a comprehensive, final and just peace.

The expansion and improvement of the representative character of the Security Council constitutes one of the most urgent needs for reform in the United Nations system. While ongoing discussions have been focusing on adding to the permanent membership in order to reflect changes in the global balance since 1945, as well as on the right of veto and its use, we should not disregard the long-term beneficial effects of allowing more nations to participate in the decision-making process of this critically important body.

In this context, the Greek Government has decided to present its candidature for one of the two non-permanent seats allocated to the Group of Western European and other States in the Security Council for the period 1999-2000. It should be noted that Greece, a founding member of the United Nations, is one of the very few Western countries that have served only once as a non-permanent member of the Council, and that was more than 40 years ago. Greece is located at a crossroads in the Balkans and southeastern Europe, a region that should be given the opportunity to be represented on and to participate actively in the Council. My country's firm and unconditional commitment to the peaceful settlement of disputes, in accordance with the fundamental principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, offers all the necessary guarantees that its election will indeed serve the cause of international peace and security.

On the eve of the third millennium, an affirmation of peace and cohesion among peoples must, more than ever before, constitute the primary legacy to bequeath to future generations. It befits the United Nations to be the depository and guarantor of this legacy. It rests with Member States to make solidarity, security and development their watchwords for concrete action and their battle cry in the fight against discord and injustice.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I call next on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Spain, His Excellency Mr. Abel Matutes.

Mr. Matutes (Spain) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I would like first of all to express to Ambassador Razali my cordial congratulations on his election as President of the General Assembly. I am firmly convinced that his qualities will enable us to solve successfully the central questions of particular relevance included in our agenda. Permit me as well in these opening comments to extend my fraternal gratitude to Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral of Portugal for his rigorous and able leadership during the fiftieth session of the General Assembly. I would also like to express my respect to the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, whose efforts at the head of the Secretariat in this particularly difficult moment Spain considers very positive and worthy of our support.

The Spanish delegation fully subscribes to the statement made a few days ago by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ireland on behalf of the European Union, in which he set out the common goals and priorities of Europe for the present session of the General Assembly.

I would now like to refer in detail to various issues of particular interest to my country. First of all, however, I wish to reaffirm the strong commitment of Spain and its new Government to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. On 26 June 1945 at San Francisco, at a time when mankind still had not recovered from the horrors of the Second World War, the representatives of the peoples of the United Nations expressed their firm resolve to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. They also reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights; in the dignity and worth of the human person; and in the equal rights of men and nations, both large and small.

Fifty-one years later, when the necessary conditions for a new international order based on cooperation and solidarity among nations have finally been met, the commitments made in San Francisco take on renewed standing. The United Nations, in fact, constitutes at present the best instrument at mankind's disposal to face and solve — jointly, on the basis of dialogue and solidarity among Member States — the global challenges confronting mankind at the end of the millennium.

We must make sure that our political commitment to the Organization is manifested in actions, not only by making available the necessary financial resources, but also through the active search for consensus solutions for the reform of the United Nations within the various working groups of the General Assembly. Our Organization, which was designed to respond to both global challenges and to the needs of its Member States, will not be able to play its double role in the coming century unless it can count on a sound, solid and stable financial basis. Convinced of this need, Spain, the ninth-largest contributor to the budget of the Organization, pays promptly and in full its assessed contributions.

When we celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations with the renewed commitment of all the Member States to the principles of the Charter, we all concurred on the need to adapt the Organization to the new international situation by enhancing its efficiency through an in-depth reform which will revitalize and strengthen it. Obviously, carrying out this task means the continuation and the deepening of the necessary rationalization and savings measures already undertaken by the Secretariat. In this respect, the approval at the last session of the General Assembly of the programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997, has given Spain satisfaction.

We are aware today more than ever before, of the interrelated nature of the problems confronting the international community and of impossibility for Member States of solving them individually. This is why there is no doubt that it is within the framework of the United Nations where we must bring together efforts in order to face in solidarity the many crises which menace the world.

The international community certainly cannot remain impassive before the magnitude of problems such as the ones faced by the African continent. This year we have witnessed terrifying massacres — such as those in Liberia — and the displacement of people in the Great Lakes region, particularly in Burundi where we continue to witness a terrible and tragic spectacle.

Africa is not, however, a continent entirely and inevitably abandoned to hopelessness. There are countries in which the tenacious efforts of their leaders and the courage of their peoples allow them to embrace hope. The return to the rule of law, the establishment of solid democracies and respect for human rights are the way to establish the foundations of a sustained and sustainable development which will ensure the welfare of all Africans.

The Government of Spain has followed with great attention the developments in the Middle East — focused in the peace process between Arabs and Israelis — in which the question of Palestine continues to be the central point. We are following with great concern the serious events that have taken place in recent days in Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza, and we wish to reiterate our call to the parties involved to abstain from all acts of provocation and violence that could lead to a new escalation of tension which could jeopardize the peace process.

Furthermore, the Israeli elections held in May and the establishment of the new Government became the basic points of reference for the assessment of this complex issue and for the analysis of its future prospects. After a brief period of uncertainty, the Israeli Government has clearly stated its intention to honour fully the contents of the agreements concluded in Oslo and Washington in the spirit of the principles of Madrid.

Such a positive statement of intentions would have to be followed immediately by concrete and tangible progress, which would strengthen the credibility of the peace process as the only valid alternative to attain peaceful coexistence in the region.

There are still many problems to be solved. On the one hand, it is of course necessary to preserve and strengthen the safety of civilians from the blind and ruthless violence of terrorism; on the other, the closure of the Palestinian territories, the delay in redeployment of the Israeli Army in Hebron and the policy of settlements represent serious obstacles for progress in the peace process.

On the basis of the Florence Declaration issued by the European Union, I avail myself of this opportunity firmly to reiterate the commitment of Spain to the Middle East peace process as the only way to solve this question. In this respect, my Government will continue to work actively, at the national level and within the European Union, to promote the cause of peace and understanding among the peoples of the region.

On a broader level, I wish to express my satisfaction at the initial achievements of the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue. The Spanish Government's priority objective is to contribute to the balanced and harmonious development of the three dimensions of this process: political, economic and human. To this end, it will be necessary to maintain and enhance the "spirit of Barcelona" shown by all countries participating in the Ministerial Conference that my country had the honour of hosting last November.

In connection with the question of Western Sahara, I must express the concern of the Spanish Government at the suspension of the voter-identification operation and the blocking of the settlement plan. In this respect, I wish to recall before this Assembly Spain's principled position, according to which the question of Western Sahara will be solved permanently only through the exercise of the right of self-determination by the people of Western Sahara in a free referendum with international guarantees.

The recent elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina have ended a cycle in the process of implementation of the Dayton Agreement that was marked by an inevitable predominance of military over civilian aspects. Peace has become a reality in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the absence of confrontation is tangible evidence of the success of the multinational military operation. However, along with this success has been an absence of the necessary reconciliation between the parties and the restoration of mutual confidence.

Since the onset of the conflict, Spain has contributed to its solution with a substantial military presence in the United Nations Protection Force, subsequently renewed in the multinational, Implementation Force. My Government intends to continue supporting stability and reconciliation in the region as well as the United Nations efforts along those lines.

The consolidation of democratic Governments, growing respect for human rights and economic and social progress are a tangible reality in and a stimulus for the future of Latin America, a continent to which Spain is linked by solid historical ties of mutual friendship and confidence. We are particularly gratified by the positive developments in Central America, where the consolidated advances of democracy and the increasing stability of peace demonstrate that efforts to promote the rule of law, good governance and respect for human rights are finally having tangible effects on the lives of the people.

I wish to underline, from this rostrum, Spain's commitment to peacekeeping operations. My Government firmly intends to continue contributing to these operations. I wish to pay my warmest and most sincere tribute to the men and women involved in all these operations for their altruistic and selfless work in conditions of extreme difficulty and high risk, which sometimes has meant sacrificing their lives in the interest of peace.

The United Nations peacekeeping operations have become a cornerstone of the activity of our Organization. I wish to highlight here the important momentum given by the Secretary-General in his "An Agenda for Peace" to the development and deepening of new concepts of preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peacekeeping.

The role of the United Nations in the decolonization process, particularly in the definition of its general principles, to which Spain adheres unequivocally, has been fundamental. The current membership of this General Assembly clearly demonstrates that the process has been one of the great achievements of our time.

In fact, the main phase of decolonization ended some time ago. However, anachronistic colonial situations persist that ought not to be forgotten. One of the priority objectives of the Spanish Government is the decolonization of Gibraltar. Through its resolutions, this General Assembly pointed the way to a decolonization process which, based on the principle of territorial integrity, should be carried out through bilateral negotiations between the United Kingdom, the Colony's administrative Power and Spain, the State in whose territory the Colony is located. The Spanish Government will carry out with the greatest flexibility, but also the greatest firmness, the future bilateral negotiations with the United Kingdom on the basis of the Brussels Declaration of November 1984, with the clear aim of moving forward in the process to culminate in the restoration of Spain's full territorial integrity, generously safeguarding the interests of the Colony's population and convinced of the urgent need to bring an end to the anachronism of the existence of a colony of one European Union member State in the territory of another friendly and allied member State.

Spain is pleased to have fulfilled its aspiration of becoming a full member of the Conference on Disarmament. In this capacity, we will continue to support the enlargement of the Conference to include other candidates still hoping to join.

We are pleased that the General Assembly adopted by an overwhelming majority the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which I have had the honour to sign on behalf of my country. Spain will participate in the network of seismological centres set up for the international verification of compliance with the Treaty and will support the early start-up of the Treaty organization.

Universal adherence to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons continues to be a priority objective, along with the other initiatives in the field of nuclear disarmament.

Spain, one of the first signatories to ratify the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, is also pleased that the figure of 65 ratifications necessary for its entry into force is about to be reached. We trust that all the signatory States

that have yet to do so will deposit their instruments of ratification as soon as possible.

My country is carrying out the necessary procedures to ratify the new Protocol IV on blinding laser weapons and we are making every effort to put an end to the tragic effects of anti-personnel mines.

I referred at the beginning of my statement to the need, which I know is shared, to proceed with the reform, revitalization and strengthening of the United Nations. We must make our Organization the centre for harmonizing efforts to promote respect for international law, world peace and equality for all, streamlining the mechanisms of the Charter and removing the political and logistical obstacles that all too often hinder its work.

As part of the institutional reform, the process of expanding and reforming the Security Council stands out. It is well known that Spain supports a moderate increase in the membership of the Council as the result of a considered negotiating process and with the final aim of enhancing the legitimacy of its actions.

On the other hand, "An Agenda for Development" must be a key element in this reform process and the culmination of the series of major conferences focusing on the integral development of the individual that have been held in recent years.

In the general context of this common task of reforming the United Nations, I should like in particular to refer to the new measures, adopted by this Assembly in resolution 50/227, on restructuring and revitalization in the economic, social and other fields. These measures reaffirm the unequivocal will of all countries significantly to improve the work of the Economic and Social Council as the central mechanism for coordinating and supervising United Nations activities in the economic and social fields.

As an example of Spain's commitment to the development activities of the Organization, I should like to recall that, in the past year, my country has concluded a host of bilateral agreements with various bodies of the United Nations system for the funding of specific projects for developing countries.

The Rio Summit was a milestone in the history of the fight against enviropmental deterioration and established the basis for a concept of sustainable development that does not compromise the welfare of future generations. However, the health of our planet is far from being as good as it ought to be. We must take advantage of the forthcoming special session of this Assembly to give new impetus to the joint efforts being made to protect the environment, the true common heritage of humankind.

The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted at the World Conference on Human Rights defined the promotion and protection of human rights as a priority objective of the international community. Spain fully subscribes to this principle. The promotion and protection of human rights are in themselves ineluctable necessities, and the survival of many, many human beings depends on their effective implementation. Sustainable development for all is not feasible without institutions that help in the realization of human rights.

In this regard, the High Commissioner for Human Rights should have more resources at hand to continue his laudable work on restructuring the Centre for Human Rights. On the other hand, defending human rights is particularly important where the weakest people, those most needing protection and self-defence, are involved. In this context, Spain believes that we should capitalize on the stimulus of the World Congress on the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children held recently in Stockholm, to promote through this Organization the most rigorous and comprehensive protection of minors.

In the final phase of the League of Nations, an attempt was made, unfortunately without success, to implement the trilogy of arbitration-security-disarmament. The Government of Spain is convinced that the prohibition of the use and threat of use of force must be accompanied by a general provision in international law making recourse to jurisdictional channels mandatory for the settlement of disputes. It was for this reason that, in a unilateral declaration of 15 October 1990, our Government, the Government of Spain, recognized as compulsory, *ipso facto* and without special agreement, the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice, as provided for in the Statute of the Court.

It is true that the United Nations cannot solve all the problems of humankind. But our Organization can look back with the certainty that its role, in the past and in the present, has not been and is not insignificant and that, for many regions of our planet, the present and the future would be different, harsher and more forlorn without the United Nations.

For this reason, I could not conclude without reiterating the firmest and most rigorous commitment of Spain to the United Nations.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mexico, His Excellency Mr. José Angel Gurria Treviño.

Mr. Gurria Treviño (Mexico) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Let me begin by conveying to the President my warmest congratulations on his election as President of this session of the General Assembly, which is recognition, not just of his personal qualities, but also of the leading role Malaysia is called on to play in a part of the world that is characterized by the rapid pace of its economic development and where we are engaging in joint efforts as members of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Council.

My country wishes to express its recognition of the spirit of rationality and moderation that has marked the way in which the President has discharged his duties in this period of restructuring as part of the complex task of maintaining peace as the essential prerequisite for ensuring a more just world free from discrimination of any kind and aberrant xenophobia. As this is the moment of truth for the United Nations, we wish to express our hope that the work he has done in guiding this Organization so far will continue so as to consolidate the restructuring process.

In the face of the two options that exist for resolving the constant and recurrent crises that afflict the world — law and justice on the one hand, force and violence on the other — Mexico has always opted for the former.

We are here not to engage in a mere ritual act, but to reiterate our full commitment to this common effort that we initiated half a century ago. This commitment has to be renewed every day, because peace and security are not free gifts bestowed once and for all, but values that have to be conquered and maintained from day to day.

A year ago, the world's leaders came together in this forum to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of our Organization. They reaffirmed the validity of the principles and purposes embodied in the Charter of the United Nations and agreed on new parameters for our collective activity. The complex effort made in 1996 to ensure a proper follow-up to them must continue to be our target for the coming year.

Although not with the forcefulness and clarity that would be justified by current law and demanded by the international community, the International Court of Justice recognized, in an Advisory Opinion of July this year, that the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons run counter to international law. The Court also emphasized that

> "there exists an obligation on all States to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control."

The General Assembly must give immediate effect to this by urging the initiation of negotiations on the subject in the Conference on Disarmament.

While we welcome this ruling, we do not agree with another assertion of the Court within the Opinion that the threat or use of nuclear weapons could be legal in the extreme circumstance of self-defence.

The Treaty of Tlatelolco, which Mexico promoted and for which it acts as depositary, was the first legal instrument specifically to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in a densely populated region. Mexico will continue to encourage the strengthening of the regime established by this Treaty, which has undoubtedly served as a precedent for other treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones throughout the world.

Mexico welcomes the recent addition of the new South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone to those already existing in the South Pacific and in Africa. We hope that we shall soon be able to add another nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, which would undoubtedly help to promote détente in that area. We firmly support Brazil's initiative to proclaim the southern hemisphere of our planet a nuclear-weapon-free zone.

On 24 September, just a few days ago, Mexico signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Despite the fact that its structure is not entirely satisfactory, particularly with respect to its entry into force, we signed it because we believe that it is a vital step in a programme of action for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, the ultimate objective of our efforts in this connection. Mexico and 27 other countries members of the Conference on Disarmament have already submitted a draft programme that we hope can be considered as soon as possible. If we make enough progress in this direction, it might even be possible to overcome one of the main obstacles to the entry into force of the CTBT, which is currently being

hindered by those obstacles mentioned earlier. Meanwhile, until the Treaty — on which we worked for almost two years of negotiations — comes into force, we urge all countries to guide their actions in accordance with its text, even before its formal entry into force.

It is a matter of great concern that the two Powers acknowledged to possess chemical weapons have postponed ratification of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction, which took us 20 years to negotiate and requires only two more ratifications to enter fully into force. We shall be initiating consultations with a view to submitting a draft resolution on this subject. We urge the United States Congress and the Russian Federation to ratify the Convention as soon as possible.

Also on the subject of disarmament, we wish to draw attention to the fact that the President of Mexico, Mr. Ernesto Zedillo, recently made two proposals at the Rio Group summit in Cochabamba, Bolivia. The first concerned the need to adopt a convention against the illegal arms trade, which relates directly to the struggle in which we are all engaged against drug trafficking, crime and terrorism. The second concerned the desirability of adopting measures for the control of conventional offensive weapons in Latin America with a view to avoiding arms races that would divert resources essential to our economic development.

We welcome the Canadian initiative, to which Mexico gives its unreserved support, regarding the initiation of consultations with a view to securing, as speedily as possible, a total ban on the deployment, transfer, production and stockpiling of anti-personnel landmines. We believe the matter to be both important and urgent. Accordingly, we propose that this Assembly consider this issue in that light.

It is precisely because we do not see peace as the mere absence of war that we believe that international peace and security must be embodied in development and equity. Peace is inseparable from development; security is inseparable from prosperity. If we sow today for development, we shall reap the peace, security and international harmony that must mark the world of the next millennium.

Accordingly, Mexico enthusiastically supports the work of the United Nations and its specialized agencies on economic and social issues and, in particular, the adoption of an agenda for development as the basis of its efforts to eradicate poverty.

That is why we view with growing concern the fact that, in supposed support of freedom and democracy, action is being taken in the opposite direction through the adoption of laws in the field of trade — the nerve centre of contemporary progress — that are extraterritorial in scope and in complete disagreement with the fundamental principles of international law. I would draw the Assembly's attention to the opinion of the Inter-American Juridical Committee of the Organization of American States, distributed in document A/51/394, on the subject of the so-called Helms-Burton Act. It argues convincingly that this Act is not in keeping with international law. It is neither by means of blockades or exclusions, nor by the application of sanctions on third countries that democracy and human rights can be promoted. Dialogue, inclusion in multilateral forums, trade, investment and the exchange of information and persons have always proven to be the best way to disseminate the values we all share.

Drug trafficking has attained unprecedented levels worldwide, to the point where it has become one of the most serious threats to the integrity of societies and the very security of nations. Despite the vast resources directed by Governments towards combating illicit drugs, the power of the drug traffickers is increasing, as is the number of victims claimed by drug addiction and the collateral damage caused to the social environment and the economy. There is an urgent need to draw up and put into effect measures and strategies which, on the basis of international cooperation and shared responsibility, will make it possible to launch a comprehensive attack on this phenomenon and to do away with partial and subjective evaluations in rating the level of compliance of each Government in combating drug trafficking, or, still worse, in making use of this rating as a political weapon and pressure tactic.

We trust that, in the course of this session, the General Assembly will take a fundamental step to intensify the fight against drug trafficking by convening in 1998, on the recommendation of the Economic and Social Council, a special session to assess the state of international cooperation in combating the production, sale, demand, trafficking and unlawful distribution of narcotics, psychotropic substances and related activities. Once the draft resolution on this issue is adopted, we shall have to get down to the task of preparing an appropriate agenda for that special session, incorporating the specific ideas put forward in the Economic and Social

Council and in this Assembly. In this connection, the statement made on 23 September by the President of Colombia, Dr. Ernesto Samper Pizano, is of special interest.

Mexico recognizes and scrupulously respects the sovereign right of every nation to determine the rules and conditions for the admission of foreign workers to its territory. Nevertheless, the situation of our nationals in foreign countries has become a source of legitimate concern to all sectors of society in my country in response to the emergence of disturbing outbreaks of racism and xenophobia in some countries to which migratory flows are directed. We firmly reject all actions or omissions on the part of national and local authorities in the recipient countries that may contribute to creating or exacerbating an atmosphere of violence and intolerance against such workers and their families. In our view, the mere existence of such a climate runs counter to the basic assumption of respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all. Mexico believes that this complex problem must be approached in a way that goes beyond mere measures of repression and humiliation, but is rather comprehensive, objective, broad in scope and responsive to regional and subregional characteristics.

My country is convinced that the early entry into force of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families is certain to constitute an appropriate framework for the protection of the rights of millions of people who emigrate in search of better living conditions. Moreover, we believe that it is necessary to draw up, as part of the effort to protect the human rights of migrants, minimum rules that will protect them in any recipient country, regardless of their legal status and of the protection afforded them by the laws of the country to which they emigrate. We shall be submitting proposals in this regard at the next session of the Commission on Human Rights.

Meanwhile, Mexico has been making a major effort to improve the treatment and protection of the migrants entering our territory across the southern border. Moreover, the Mexican Government has recently taken a decision to regularize the migratory status of more than 30,000 refugees, most of them Guatemalan, who have settled in camps in the States of Campeche and Quintana Roo under the auspices of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. In a joint effort with all the countries of Central America — including Belize and Panama — and the United States and Canada, Mexico has embarked on a campaign to combat and punish illegal trafficking in persons, which has now taken on the attributes of international organized crime. We are also working to pass legislation at the congressional level to increase the penalties and lengthen the sentences for those found guilty of this illegal trafficking.

As the Heads of State and Government of the so-called Group of 16, of which Mexico is a member, indicated on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, it is vital that we strengthen the multilateral approach to solving the problems that affect the community as a whole. We view with particular concern the lack of substantive progress in the various working groups responsible for examining the main aspects of the reform of the Organization, and for this reason we should like to propose that efforts be concentrated in the following areas.

The capacity of the United Nations to prevent conflicts and resolve those that already exist must be enhanced. This would include, among other actions, breaking the deadlock in the reform of the Security Council, whose primary responsibility is the maintenance of international peace and security. Secondly, measures should be taken to strengthen the mechanisms for resolving conflicts and disputes by peaceful means through a convention on the subject. And, finally, the role of the Secretary-General in conflict prevention should be strengthened. An example of what action by the Secretary-General can achieve is the important agreement signed in Mexico City on 19 September between the Government of Guatemala and the general command of the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca, which will make a significant contribution to the attainment of lasting peace in that country, and in which the Secretary-General and a group of friends, including Mexico, participated.

From this rostrum I wish to pay tribute to the work of the Moderator, which was essential to the signing of six substantive agreements in the Guatemalan process. Now we are awaiting only the signing of a few operational agreements, which will lead to the early establishment of a lasting peace in that country.

With regard to the reform of the Security Council, Mexico considers it essential that in evaluating the proposals before us, account should be taken of the need for that organ's composition to reflect the increase in the membership of the Organization, while strictly respecting the wishes of the countries of each region and the principle of equitable geographical representation.

The United Nations must also strengthen its activities in the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, again on the basis of the contractual obligations entered into by each State, and in eliminating any vestiges of colonialism or of discrimination on grounds of sex, religion, race or political conviction.

One of the most urgent and complex issues of the reform process is that of revising the financing system and the criteria for establishing the contributions of Member States. But let us be frank: the financial crisis the United Nations is experiencing stems primarily from the lack of timely payment of assessed contributions by a considerable number of countries. This situation must be normalized as speedily as possible.

The maintenance of international peace and security continues to be the primary mission of the United Nations. Barely seven years ago, a sigh of relief marked the ending of the long night of the cold war. Hopes were reborn that, with peace strengthened, confidence in the United Nations would grow, the ambitions of dominance on the part of the economically and militarily powerful countries would cease, and a spirit of tolerance and harmony, of equity and mutual assistance — indispensable for the building of a better world — would soon develop. There was talk of "peace dividends". The reality has been more complex.

Mexico expresses its dismay at the violent incidents that have occurred recently in the Middle East and joins the appeal of the international community to all parties concerned to refrain from undertaking any actions that could worsen the situation and provoke further clashes. Such incidents constitute a dramatic reminder of the need for the parties to redouble their efforts with a view to advancing the peace process and ensuring that dialogue and reason prevail in the region.

Despite the magnitude of the obstacles that have to be overcome in order to ensure that human beings are educated for peace, Mexico maintains a profound faith in the United Nations, whose structures must be strengthened if we truly wish to give it the necessary capacity to discharge the complex and lofty tasks entrusted to it half a century ago, as well as those additional tasks it is charged with almost daily.

With renewed optimism, we trust that human beings still possess the resourcefulness and talent required to make this world a worthy and just abode for all.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Myanmar, Mr. Ohn Gyaw.

Mr. Gyaw (Myanmar): May I begin by extending to Mr. Razali the warmest congratulations of the delegation of the Union of Myanmar on his most deserving election as President of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. His election to that important office is no doubt a reflection of the high esteem in which his country, Malaysia, is held by the international community for its active role in world affairs, and of his wealth of personal experience and diplomatic skills. We are confident that under his leadership our deliberations will be fruitful. On a personal note, I should like to say how deeply honoured I was to have accompanied the Head of State Senior General Than Shwe on his state visit to Malaysia last month. The visit was a success. We were much impressed by the warm reception accorded us and by the outstanding achievements of the leadership in bringing peace and prosperity to the people of Malaysia.

I wish also to express our appreciation to Mr. Razali's predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, for his invaluable contribution to the work of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly.

The United Nations today is at a crossroads. On the one hand, there is hope for a new era in international relations as post- cold-war trends compel nations towards ever-growing interdependence and the globalization of the world economy. On the other hand, issues that have been dormant for decades have emerged, drawing the world into a pattern of conflict, ethnic strife and violence. In this time of global transformation the United Nations has an important role to play. It must actively work to guide the world through the transitional period to a new, peaceful, secure and stable era based on respect for the Charter.

In this United Nations Decade of International Law it would be most appropriate to rededicate ourselves to achieving a world in which principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, independence, sovereign equality and non-interference in the internal affairs of States are respected. Myanmar truly believes that we can overcome the political, economic and social challenges we face and avoid confrontation and chaos only if we seize the opportunity to extend and strengthen the Organization and promote a multilateral system based on the primacy of international law and freedom of choice and equality of all States.

Disarmament, sustainable development, enhancement of the environment and suppression of narcotic drugs are priority issues that affect the security and well-being of peoples throughout the world. Concern continues to mount over the lack of adequate progress in these areas. The proliferation of arms, particularly of weapons of mass destruction, remains the greatest potential threat to mankind's survival. All States, large and small, nuclear and non-nuclear, have a vital interest in ensuring the success of negotiations on disarmament. The primary responsibility for removing the threat of a nuclear holocaust, however, rests with the nuclear-weapon States. It is essential that the nuclear-weapon States show the political will to accommodate the concerns of non-nuclear-weapon States to achieve a mutually acceptable basis for universal disarmament.

Myanmar continues to regard a comprehensive test-ban treaty as an essential step towards nuclear disarmament. The adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) by the General Assembly on 10 September 1996 is a welcome development. It will contribute significantly to the process of nuclear disarmament and to our efforts to achieve the goal of general and complete disarmament.

Myanmar has always supported the establishment of nuclear-free zones. In our own region we have, together with our neighbours, signed and ratified the South East Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone Treaty. Peace and security in the world need to be built upon economic development. Without development there can be no lasting peace. It must be realized, however, that economic progress in developing countries depends as much on a fair and equitable international economic environment as it does on domestic reforms to effectively confront the challenge of poverty and economic malaise. In this regard, we share the Secretary-General's view that development should be recognized as the foremost and most far-reaching task of our time. At the same time, we are deeply concerned that the process of globalization of the world economy has yielded many more losers than winners. The situation was most eloquently described by the Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement, President Samper Pizano of Colombia, in his address to the Meeting of the Ministerial Committee on Methodology held earlier this year in Cartagena:

> "The cake of progress continues to be handed out in large slices for a few, and in crumbs for the rest."

Indeed it is distressing to note the dangerous tendency of certain States to link trade and commerce with other issues. We find unacceptable the threat or use of economic sanctions and the extraterritorial application of domestic law to influence policies in developing countries. The use of economic sanctions as a tool of policy is indefensible. It is a flagrant breach of the United Nations Charter.

Narcotic drugs are a growing menace to the international community. Aware of the problem, Myanmar is carrying out narcotics suppression as a national cause. From the outset the Myanmar Government realized that the drug problem can be tackled only through a multisectoral approach and has laid down national strategies to combat the menace. The nationwide drug-abuse control programme covers many activities: crop substitution and livestock distribution for farmers in the border areas where opium is grown; treatment and rehabilitation of drug addicts; preventive education; and law enforcement. The areas where poppies are grown are underdeveloped regions where the national races depend on the cultivation of opium as their principal means of livelihood. Hence, the Government has set up an entire ministry devoted to the development of border areas. The development of these areas will no doubt ensure the success of the eradication campaign.

In parallel with the national effort, the Government has sought closer cooperation with the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) and neighbouring countries, and is actively participating in the international campaign against the production and trafficking of illicit drugs. Our efforts are meeting with success, as one armed group after another has returned to the fold to join hands with the Government in development endeavours. An encouraging event this year was the unconditional surrender of the Mong Tai Army of nearly 20,000 men, led by U Khun Sa. We are confident that this unprecedented achievement will result in a drastic reduction of the opium supply.

I should like to firmly reiterate Myanmar's commitment to the total eradication of poppy plantations in our country. The sheer magnitude of the problem requires new ways and means to address the problem. There must be additional efforts to curb demand, just as we work to deter production and trafficking. We would welcome increased support for our national programmes or for development projects administered by UNDCP.

Environment issues are among the most widely discussed topics of our times. Environment and development top the international agenda as human impact on the environment has increased dramatically and mankind faces challenges unprecedented in scope and severity. The tremendous growth in population, coupled with industrial development in every region of the world, has taxed the carrying capacity of the Earth. The struggle even to support the present population at today's standards of living will cause environmental degradation on an unprecedented scale. However, in the last few years seeds of hope have been sown, as there is growing awareness in the world that the causes and consequences of environmental degradation transcend boundaries and that our future world must be one of partnership.

Myanmar is aware that different elements of ecological systems are linked. It is only through an integrated approach at the national, regional and global levels that we can achieve sustainable development. For this reason we have been endeavouring to contribute to the protection and promotion of the environment at every level.

In developing countries like Myanmar, forests, farmlands, fisheries and freshwater constitute the foundation of development. In Myanmar we are fortunate that these resources are abundant and are not under stress. This is largely the result of the traditional culture that pervades daily life. Planting trees, creating gardens and parks, building bridges, digging wells, and providing rest houses and monasteries are considered meritorious deeds. The people of Myanmar love and respect nature and seek to live in harmony with the environment. The history of Myanmar is replete with accounts of environmental conservation carried out by Myanmar monarchs. The ancient kings had the vision to protect teak forests by royal decree and to ensure systematic management of forest resources.

In the three years following the World Conference on Human Rights, increasing emphasis has been placed on the promotion and protection of human rights. While we can welcome the spirit in which the question of human rights is considered, we are seriously concerned by the growing tendency of certain Western countries to politicize the question of human rights and to use it as a tool to interfere in the domestic affairs of States. We firmly believe that the international community should take a more holistic approach to the question of human rights and not be preoccupied with individual rights and freedoms.

Any government, institution or individual seeking to promote human rights should bear in mind the significance of national and regional peculiarities as well as historical, cultural and religious backgrounds and the stage of economic development. In Myanmar and other developing countries, poverty remains an effective obstacle to the full enjoyment of those rights. For this reason we are redoubling our efforts to ensure our peoples' right to development so that they can be delivered from the clutches of poverty.

The allegations that wholesale repressive measures are being carried out in Myanmar have never been borne out. On the contrary, the peace and stability that now reign in the country have allowed it to achieve significant progress. Continued economic reform will positively affect the living standards of all citizens. At present there is potential in Myanmar for unprecedented peace and development and for it to join the ranks of the fast-growing economies in its region. The international community can do no better than to help Myanmar by playing a constructive role.

In recent years a few countries, such as Myanmar, have been singled out by certain countries for punitive action. Central to any assessment of the proper course of policy towards any country is an understanding of the conditions that prevail there. In the case of Myanmar, first and foremost, it should be noted that it is undergoing important reforms. Regrettably, no credit has been given to the Myanmar Government for bringing about political stability and economic progress in a short period of eight years.

The Government has initiated economic reforms aimed at transforming the centrally planned economy into a market-oriented one. Private investment and domestic entrepreneurial activity have been encouraged, and the economy has been opened to direct foreign investment. Private-sector participation in both domestic and foreign trade has been promoted. The economic reforms are bearing fruit and have led to sustained growth. In the past four years the economy recorded an average growth rate of 8.2 per cent, resulting in increased employment opportunities and significantly rising living standards in the country, primarily in urban areas, where private enterprises are flourishing, and in fertile rural areas, where farmers have better incentive to grow and market their produce.

Foreign investments in Myanmar today totals $4.3 billion and is expected to grow in the coming years. That

the pace of economic activity has quickened is reflected not only within the country but abroad, where a growing number of Myanmar representatives are taking part in international and regional forums, including sports, business and intellectual meetings.

We in Myanmar are aware that the best hope for a brighter future lies in our national races joining together to ensure the stability of the State, community peace and tranquillity. To this end a national convention is being held to adopt guidelines for a new State constitution, in accordance with which a peaceful, modern and developed nation will be built.

It should be appreciated that Myanmar is a union composed of 135 national races from which 16 armed groups have evolved, some dating back to 1948, the year of our independence. It should also be noted that, despite the magnitude of the task, the Myanmar Government has succeeded in bringing back to the fold 15 out of the 16 armed groups and has established a separate Ministry for Progress of Border Areas and National Races and Development Affairs. Insurgency, which hindered development for decades, is now virtually over, and all the energy of the defence forces and the people is being devoted to nation-building. One fact that is often overlooked is the pervasive influence of traditional culture in Myanmar, as a result of which leniency has been shown to offenders. Although a number of death sentences were handed down by civil and military courts following the 1988 unrest in the country, none has been carried out.

One factor that demonstrates our confidence in the positive changes taking place in Myanmar is our readiness to open our doors to tourists. This year has been designated "Visit Myanmar Year", and we are expecting hundreds of thousands of visitors despite the negative campaign launched by critics. Those who call for a travel boycott to Myanmar should remember that tourism benefits a wide range of people, the visitors as well as the hosts. Big hotels and travel agencies, as well as the family-run stalls that sell everything from hand-crafted jewellery to lacquer-ware and wood carvings, stand to make a living. Why not encourage tourists to come to Myanmar and see for themselves the vast transformations taking place?

Today, as we stand on the threshold of a new millennium, we have before us both opportunities and challenges. At this time of important change and transformation, the United Nations and its Member States must strive to ensure that all nations can live in peace and harmony. To this end, we will need a man of exceptional skills and wisdom at the helm of the Organization in the years ahead. We should continue to seek the best man for the job, bearing in mind the personal skills and integrity that the important post demands. The choice of the Secretary-General of the Organization assumes an even greater importance at this time, when we see increasing resort to the threat or use of force in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and principles of the Organization.

In conclusion, I should like to renew Myanmar's pledge to work with all nations to strengthen the Organization and to achieve universal peace.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of El Salvador, His Excellency Mr. Ramón Ernesto González Giner.

Mr. González Giner (El Salvador) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I should like to extend to the President and to all the delegations of Member States the cordial greetings of the people and Government of El Salvador. I should also like to congratulate the President on his election to preside over this session and to express thanks to Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral for the dedication with which he carried out his mandate. At this session, we must adopt very important decisions designed to strengthen the Organization. We are convinced that the President's pragmatism and experience will help our debate to take a proper course, overcome obstacles and give impetus to the reforms called for by Member States.

In October 1995 we celebrated the golden anniversary of the United Nations, an occasion that afforded us an opportunity to assess the work of the Organization, to recognize the importance of this institution in deepening understanding among nations and to ensure that its purposes and principles remain fully in effect. At that time, world leaders agreed to support the implementation of the reform needed to ensure that the international community would indeed have an effective Organization able to meet the requirements presented by a constantly changing world.

In the light of that commitment, we believe that at this session debate should avoid unnecessary confrontation and be focused on the formulation of practical recommendations to ensure that the joint efforts of Member States will be in accordance with the Declaration adopted at the fiftieth anniversary. In so doing, important decisions can be taken that will give the

Organization the capabilities and resources to meet the challenges of the new millennium effectively.

The dynamics of the international system in recent years lead us to an even greater appreciation of the various initiatives that have been discussed with regard to the common problems that affect us all. In solving them, we must act together and share the successful experiences of each individual State in order to improve the standard of living of all our peoples.

We commend the successful convening of summits, at which programmes of action on global problems relating to women, children, human rights, the environment, social development, population and human settlements have been adopted. These conferences are a clear demonstration of the political will and the moral commitment of the international community to redefine the paradigms for sustainable development by means of rekindled creativity focused on the individual as well as the family.

The complexity and interdependency of our problems oblige each and every Member State to redouble their efforts to participate more actively in finding solutions. Such solutions must emerge from a new vision of the current international situation, characterized by increasingly globalized economies and requiring greater efficiency and competitiveness in the productive sectors in order successfully to confront higher levels of competition.

Despite the positive elements of this picture, we must not confound joint efforts with the principal responsibility that each and every government bears in solving the problems affecting its own society.

In the global political situation, we note with satisfaction that progress has been made in participatory democracy throughout the world. This is one of the most important phenomena at the end of this century, as it enables individuals to participate directly and creatively in solving their own problems.

We are convinced that United Nations efforts to resolve and contain conflicts by means of peacekeeping operations are beneficial to the achievement of world harmony. In addition to having benefited from this process, El Salvador has been an active party to it.

Our country's experience in effectively settling its recent armed conflict can help other countries dealing with similar situations. This makes it possible for us to share our knowledge and experience with the international community, to contribute to solving such conflicts by means of dialogue and common work, leading to the consolidation of peace, democracy and respect for human rights.

We have said that there has been a sea change in the international system, but conflicts and problems remain. At this time, we wish to encourage their resolution in an atmosphere of cooperation, dialogue and negotiation by means of frank and objective discussion.

In recent years, 25 new States have exercised their sovereign right to self-determination and become Members of the United Nations, thereby reaffirming the Organization's principle of universality. Unfortunately this principle has not been fully respected and will not be fully respected until all States, including the Republic of China in Taiwan, are represented in the United Nations.

The creation of jobs, the rule of law, the security of citizens, access to proper housing, health, education, medical care and nutrition for children, and a clean and life-sustaining environment are all requirements that deserve priority. If at the United Nations we can formulate policies and carry out innovative, effective activities in this connection, people throughout the world, particularly the most dispossessed, can benefit from this important step forward in solving their problems. This is the only way the Organization can truly make a creative and effective contribution to ensuring that democracy is perceived as a positive process for humankind.

The financial problems of our Organization are an obstacle to the proper functioning of its programmes and activities, especially those in less developed countries. The needs of development require that the United Nations function more transparently, effectively and, above all, efficiently. For this, our beliefs and our actions must be consistent.

The new vision that is emerging in the international system can be explained by the domestic transformations taking place in many countries throughout the world. Central America is a part of this process. Allow me to describe the current experiences of our region. A few years before the start of the new millennium, the Central American countries have left behind our sad history of confrontation and have embarked upon the path to peace, freedom, democracy and development, as shaped by the Central American Presidents in our Alliance for the Sustainable Development of Central America. This Alliance comprises policies, programmes and activities

that provide a new system for integral development and are creating progressive change in living standards by ensuring economic growth with social equity, and development that is in harmony with nature, thus ensuring that future generations will have a high quality of life.

The Central American Presidents also adopted a series of commitments to work together to meet the objectives of the Alliance for Sustainable Development. In political terms, these include strengthening and consolidating the rule of law and democratic security as well as modernizing the public sector; in economic terms, improving economic integration, harmonizing macroeconomic policies and modernizing regional infrastructures; in the social sphere, systematically reducing poverty, emphasizing job-creation and investment in human capital, giving priority to eduction, health and training; in the cultural area, ensuring the preservation of the values and traditions of the cultural heritage of the Central American peoples; and in environmental terms, preserving and protecting the bio-diversity of the region, promoting reforestation and the appropriate utilization of water catchment areas, biological corridors and protected areas.

In El Salvador, barely four years after the signature of the peace accords, we are pleased to note that we have come close to full implementation of the commitments entered into at the time and are moving strongly towards establishing democratic institutions and national reconstruction. Our peace process has been held up as an example, and we are pleased to serve as a model and an encouragement to ensure that situations similar to ours can be solved in other areas of the world. After having solved a prolonged domestic conflict by political means, we Salvadorans have many challenges before us which can be summed up in a few words: the achievement of a lasting, stable and modern democracy based on the rule of law that will enable us to achieve social peace and the building of a new El Salvador.

For these reasons, we are determined to expedite actions aimed at satisfying the deepest aspirations of our people: worthwhile and well-paid work; a participatory education stressing the creation of a culture of peace based on civic and moral values; a health system that is not only curative but preventive; the promotion of micro-enterprises and small businesses; full respect for and promotion of human rights, including special emphasis on the rights of women and children; the restoration and preservation of our environment; strengthening the rule of law; and the consolidation of a true system of civil liberties. On this basis, the Salvadoran people will be able to put all of their talents and efforts into achieving the sustainable and integral development of society.

We believe that human and economic development are two sides of the same coin, and mutually dependent. Greater human development makes possible conditions under which economic development can increase, which in turn produces increased resources to stimulate human development.

Accordingly, the Government of President Armando Calderón Sol is carrying out reforms that will allow for the creation of a country replete with opportunities for all Salvadorans, thereby breaking the vicious circle of poverty in which those born poor are condemned to die poor.

This objective can be achieved as long as we, as a nation, have a single vision that goes beyond different ideological or political circumstances. The great task facing this generation in El Salvador is to recognize that society is a whole and to ensure that all the force of history is brought to bear in order to find solutions that benefit the entire population.

The people and Government of El Salvador wish to reaffirm their recognition of the contribution made by the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, his representatives and the agencies of the United Nations system, to the consolidation of peace, democracy and reconstruction in our country. We would like also to thank the international community for its material, technical and financial support to complement the efforts of the Salvadoran people to achieve peace and sustainable development, which has enabled us to begin a process of modernization, so as to meet successfully the challenges of the twenty-first century.

In conclusion, we would like to express our absolute confidence that, at the conclusion of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly, the peoples of the world who are represented here will have reached a greater level of understanding, trust and cooperation, enabling them to deal together with the problems affecting the international community.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I now call on the permanent representative of Belize, Mr. Edward A. Laing.

Mr. Laing (Belize): In this fifty-first year of the United Nations, we are particularly happy to see

Mr. Razali Ismail presiding over this Assembly. This is in no small measure due to his well-deserved high reputation. In large measure, too, our joy comes from my Government's appreciation of the deep commitment of his Government to national and international economic improvement with equity. We are grateful, too, for the excellent services rendered by his predecessor, Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, in a year in which, under his guidance, reform of the United Nations system truly gathered momentum.

Today it is often remarked that there are many signs of the diminishing role of national sovereignty. In the sphere of human rights, the regional adjudicatory systems continue to flourish. Scrutiny is increasingly given by the regional bodies and by such other groupings as the Commonwealth of nations. We have good reason to believe that the new commonwealth of Portuguese-speaking nations will soon travel along the same path. At the United Nations, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the Commission on Human Rights and the human rights treaty bodies all continue to scrutinize States for their rectitude in the field of human rights. It certainly seems that the High Commissioner for Human Rights, together with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other executive agencies, are performing a useful watchdog and catalytic function.

While this Organization's efforts at humanitarian intervention have not been overwhelmingly successful, they have certainly provided evidence of the probable reality that absolutist notions of State sovereignty are in decline. Thus, we witness the acknowledgement, by States, of shared interests which contribute to enhanced cooperation in joint efforts to combat the trafficking of narcotics and to preserve and regenerate the environment. Recently, too, the Organization of American States launched an initiative that points in the same direction: the inter-American convention against corruption.

Corruption has been a scourge throughout our region, as it is elsewhere. In our region, therefore, we have determined drastically to reduce its impact, even if that might have implications for State sovereignty. In the same way, the flurry of conventions and new organizations on the global environment, and the outpourings of the recent global conferences and summits on social and other issues bear witness to the rapid erosion of absolutist notions of sovereignty.

During the past year efforts have been to bring into being the long-awaited International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea. Despite certain regrettable limitations, the Appellate Body of the World Trade Organization, the new tribunal for international trade disputes, has now issued its first judgment. We have also settled down to serious work in preparing for an international criminal court, just as the Tribunals for the prosecution of war crimes in the former Yugoslavia and in Rwanda are getting under way. These all constitute a significant development in the international system, in which the State and its citizens are increasingly made subject to international scrutiny.

We must insist, however, that what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. We therefore expect that large States, as well as small States, will fully submit themselves to these new Tribunals. We also fully expect that powerful States will refrain from exerting their sovereign wills over smaller or weaker States.

On a different subject, we have also witnessed a certain contraction of the public sector both within nations and international organizations. The attrition of the national budgets of capital-exporting and donor countries has had a domino effect on international organizations and capital-importing and recipient countries. So-called reductions in force and other forms of structural adjustment have therefore become a painful way of life. In this respect, this Organization and my country and many others have not been spared. At the same time, my country and many others have now established modern and rational systems for the imposition and collection of indirect taxes and other revenues. I refer especially to the value-added tax, the use of which is now virtually universal.

Like most Governments, mine has had to trim several vital services. Everywhere, Governments are obliged to experiment with the privatization of many former State functions and have liquidated large chunks of State property. Even as these changes occur within many economies and Governmental structures, other actors have stepped onto the national and international stage. These actors, of course, include civil society and the non-governmental organizations, which now participate in almost every aspect of life.

At the same time, we are trying to understand and cope with the novel phenomenon of globalization. Globalization has several positive aspects, especially liberalization, which it presupposes. However, globalization also seems to presuppose the universalization of mammoth private-sector enterprises

and associations. This universalization is accompanied by revision or, in places, the reversal of aspects of such legal and economic doctrines as those that disapproved of excessive industrial combinations and monopolies.

Nevertheless, globalization is a logical accompaniment to the reduction of the scope of sovereignty. But just as a loss of national autonomy is not an unalloyed blessing, this newfangled gigantism is too massive to be swallowed whole. For one thing, globalization as we are witnessing it today is an unprecedented phenomenon, even for the former empires. Whatever its advocates may say, it sometimes seems to contradict our very humanity, since the micro-dimension should never be neglected in the face of the macro-dimension. Both dimensions are essentially complementary. Globalization, furthermore, sometimes denies the tenets of, and the recent directions in, individual and collective human rights. This is because, when it is taken to its logical extreme, as it is in several places, it seems to lead to an international euthanasia. It contributes to a "dinner-table scraps" mentality, or a "crabs-in-the-basket" attitude, whereby the disadvantaged might starve to death or destroy others in order to survive, while those who are more advantaged are enabled to gorge even more.

Furthermore, certain forms of assertive globalization also fly in the face of diversity. They are anathema to cultural, social and economic pluralism, whose validity is uncontrovertible in socio-biological terms. As globalization is increasingly manifested in the electronic and communications media, these problems loom very large as, throughout the world, we see our youth taking on the mind-sets and the habiliments of corrupt, alien trend-setters who are mainly interested in purveying unnecessary products and creating false desires. As well we know, the consequences are often mindless violence and sexual and other exploitation of women, children and the weak. Surely this Organization must seek to ensure that these consequences are eradicated.

Globalization and the decline of State sovereignty evidence the dramatic changes sweeping the globe, a subject on which many of us often comment from this rostrum. Change is indeed the order of the day, and change, in these specific respects, is actually part and parcel of this Organization and its Charter. After all, despite the fact that some would spin theories to the contrary, the very conception of the United Nations Charter was an enthronement of the doctrine of reduced sovereignty. Only by reducing sovereignty could the excesses that were evident before and during the Second World War be curtailed. Clearly, the very conception of the United Nations presupposes a type of essential globalization.

It is therefore surprising how, in some quarters, globalization by private economic actors pursuing or motivated by the dictates of acquisitiveness, cupidity or what is referred to as "efficiency" can be applauded, while similar but much more modest behaviour by groups of sovereigns is now decried. We urge that one crucial key to meaningful reform of the United Nations must surely be enthronement of this Organization's globalism. We must, indeed, enhance efficiency by rationalizing the managerial structure of the United Nations and the ways in which we select its executives, as was intelligently suggested in the latest edition of the important study by Urquhart and Childers, entitled *A World In Need of Leadership*.

We must act globally by harnessing in common the shared resources of the planet. We repeat our call from previous general debates that this Organization, in keeping with its global function, must be given autonomous revenue authority in certain areas not presently in the domain of nation States. We must acknowledge the utility of the concept of a modest, truly representative and revocable trusteeship over certain ocean and aerial spaces.

We may also wish to acknowledge the fact that the nuclear Powers are merely revocable trustees over nuclear weapons, even as we move towards ending all forms of nuclear testing and comply with the recent Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice requiring the prompt negotiation, in good faith, of nuclear disarmament. At the same time, we must eradicate everywhere the bitter arsenals of mines and other injurious weapons and noxious substances, and ensure that substances such as nuclear waste do not pass through our territorial or other waters.

Responsible globalism will reap for the world the fruits of the promises made in connection with this Organization's wartime antecedents: that economic, social and all other forms of development are the absolute heritage of under-possessed and dispossessed individuals, peoples and nations. We are under a strict obligation to keep this Organization's Agenda for Development on the front burner. Belize has proposed that we should establish an annual special session of this Assembly immediately prior to the general debate, at which we would discuss development policy and regenerate the political will necessary continually to revise the complex Agenda for

Development and the commitments made in this Assembly, as well as at the high-level global conferences of this last decade of the twentieth century. At that annual session, we could also effectively discuss certain specific portions of the Second Committee items currently discussed during the regular session.

Enlightened globalism will compel us, with alacrity and dignity, to make good the humanitarian obligations of this "one world" to the least-developed countries, to Africa, to small developing islands and low-lying developing coastal areas like Belize, to land-locked countries and to other disadvantaged places. We should be happy to do so without repeating any of the recent tired, uncharitable and inaccurate nostrums about the death of the obligation to accord economic preferences to poor countries, even as we clamour that human rights and humanitarianism have now been elevated to a place of honour in the international pantheon.

Even as we extol the virtues of United Nations globalism, we can discern another antidote or counterpart to the gigantism of private-sector globalization. This is the phenomenon of regionalism.

Regionalism is the concept that drives many current proposals — including those of Belize — for reform of the United Nations Security Council and is a suggested basis for the selection of additional so-called permanent members — privileged, although not serving indefinitely. Incidentally, such a selection could be done entirely within the region or, as is done in many cases at present, by the Assembly.

Regionalism is the essence of Belize's proposals for shared seats on the Security Council, whereby adjacent or proximate States can pool their resources to serve the international community in that rather expensive enterprise. We gratefully acknowledge the fact that Belize's proposals have attracted some attention.

Even as portions of Central Africa appear to teeter on the brink, regionalism has been relatively effective and remains the main hope for preserving peace and security in several parts of this troubled world. It acknowledges the reality that the Organization is not structured to carry out peacemaking and peacekeeping undertakings on a sustained basis.

My delegation also believes that regionalism can become a critical element in the quest successfully to confront the menace of narcotics without leading to unwitting hegemonism.

We now see an abundance of formal arrangements for subregional integration. These are occurring throughout the five regions of the United Nations. Informal arrangements also abound. These lead us to urge nations in all parts of the world, as well as the global body politic, to explore functional cooperation on a regional and subregional basis, as we now try to do within the Association of Caribbean States and as we have done for centuries in several sub-areas of the Caribbean. We are now witnessing much fruitful regional liberalization and the integration of labour markets, competition policy, labour standards, monetary systems, investments, technical cooperation and trade.

We are happy to witness such functional regionalism in Africa, Asia, Europe and other parts of Latin America. We are also witnessing a reordering of the globe as new regions are identified and new relationships developed between regions. Thus, instead of imagining that the Pacific islands are worlds apart from the Caribbean and Central America, as we did when we looked eastward at them, we now see them as neighbouring fellow citizens of the tropics as we look westward at them over our fragile isthmus of Central America.

From this geopolitical vantage point as well, we see East Asia as a partner to the Caribbean and Central America. This helps us appreciate that the contemporary approach to statehood fully justifies the aspirations of a democratic Asian country that is one of the most substantial players in the global economy for a greater measure of political participation in the system of international organizations. That country is Taiwan. In the view of my delegation, such participation would be quite consistent with prevailing notions of sovereignty. At the same time, it is assumed that the territorial integrity of the People's Republic of China would be completely unimpaired. We believe that the statehood and dignity of the latter ancient, honourable and global Power should and would be safeguarded in any situation we have posited. Without meaning to interfere, we would hope that, in this connection, as has been stated in other contexts in these remarks, *noblesse oblige*.

Turning to another region, we must reiterate our concern about the recent retardation of the peace process between Israel and its neighbours. Again, we call for improvement of conditions in southern Lebanon and

elsewhere and for the genuine autonomy that is the birthright of the Palestinians.

Finally, we wish to suggest that regionalism, including functional cooperation, will contribute significantly to the fulfilment of the millennial dreams of the architects of this great global Organization.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

A number of representatives have asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply. May I remind members that, in accordance with decision 34/401, statements in exercise of the right of reply shall be limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Kim Chang Guk (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): I wish to make a statement in right of reply to the so-called Foreign Minister of colonial South Korea.

The statement of Mr. Ro-Myung Gong is so childish that it cannot be compared with the statements of the Foreign Ministers of other sovereign States delivered in the General Assembly. His statement is from beginning to end intended as part of an anti-North campaign to incite North-South confrontation, even in this international arena. The very appearance of Mr. Ro-Myung Gong, one of the running dogs of colonial South Korea, degrades the dignity of the United Nations.

I am now going to refute point by point the argument he aimed at us. The South Korean authorities have no qualification to talk about the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula. They are traitors to the nation who have introduced United States nuclear weapons into the living space of our nation to bring nuclear holocaust down upon it. In fact, colonial South Korea has no say with regard to the nuclear weapons of the United States that are deployed on its own territory. It is ridiculous that the South Korean authorities should take issue with us about nuclear problems. The nuclear issue can be resolved only by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States, not by the South Korean puppets.

We were the victims of chemical-weapon attacks by the United States and the South Korean puppets in the Korean War. The South Korean authorities are taking issue with us over chemical weapons to lay a smokescreen over their criminal preparations for biochemical warfare.

As for the four-party talks, I would advise the authorities of the colony of South Korea, who have no sovereignty, no power and no ability with regard to such talks, to remain mum rather than make unreasonable statements.

Lastly, I shall give a rather detailed explanation to facilitate the understanding of delegations present in this Hall. As has been reported, a sub-unit of the Korean People's Army was on a routine training course aboard a small training submarine in the waters of the North side of the East Sea of Korea on 18 September. Engine trouble compelled it to drift southward and run aground in the waters of the South off Kangrung. In this connection, the spokesman for the Ministry of the People's Armed Forces of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, in a statement dated 23 September 1996, officially confirmed that a small training submarine of the Korean People's Army was stranded in the waters of the South and demanded that the submarine, the survivors and the dead soldiers be returned unconditionally and immediately. This expresses the good will of the North side and its wish that the accident not develop into tension or misfortune, which does not help peace and the peaceful reunification of the Korean peninsula.

The South Korean authorities, however, did not reciprocate our good will to solve the problem peacefully, but answered it with ever more vicious slander of and challenges to the North, and they continue to use the accident for a sinister political purpose. From the beginning, they adopted a provocative attitude that is very dangerous. Although they directly confirm that this submarine of the North side was stranded off Kangrung while drifting, after experiencing engine trouble on 18 September, they branded it an armed spy boat and started a provocative campaign. Although the submarine crew could not but go ashore because the boat was stranded, they branded them intruding spies and mobilized a joint army-police search team to kill them.

To people's consternation, the soldiers of the North side were branded by the South Korean authorities as armed spies and armed Communist bandits, and they became the target of military attack by the South Korean army-police search team. In the course of this incident, nearly 20 soldiers of the North side were killed in cold blood. There were no grounds or conditions for them to become the target of gunfire. They had no arms or equipment for intrusion or destruction. Moreover, those killed were crewmen, including the Captain, the Chief

Engineer and the Navigator, as was reported by South Korean radio. What could they do on land after abandoning the boat?

The South Korean authorities are aggravating tensions by using the accident, which could have been settled peacefully, for the purpose of inter-Korean confrontation. Our position on peace and war is already well known: we want peace, but we are fully prepared to punish those who disturb the peace. As the flame was kindled in South Korea, we cannot remain a victim for an indefinite period.

It is self-evident that we, the victims, cannot show self-restraint any longer, as the offenders behave more arrogantly. As victims, we have the right to retaliate against the offenders. Our retaliation may be 100-fold or 1,000-fold. No matter what kind of retaliation we take, the South Korean puppets will be wholly to blame. Fire should be answered with fire. The bellicose South Korean elements are approaching the danger line with their reckless firing. The South Korean authorities must immediately stop their ill-intended campaign against our wrecked submarine and return it and the surviving and dead crewmen immediately and unconditionally. Time is not unlimited.

Mr. Ibrahim (Indonesia): My delegation would like to exercise its right of reply with regard to the statement made earlier today by His Excellency the Foreign Minister of Portugal, in which he referred to the question of East Timor. It is regrettable that once again Portugal deems it fit to mislead the international community in relation to the relevant facts concerning the decolonization process in East Timor and the human rights situation in the province.

Suffice it to say that the people of East Timor have already exercised their right to self-determination, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions 1540 (XV), 1541 (XV), and 2625 (XXV). This entire process culminated in the formal promulgation into law of the statute of integration on 17 July 1976. It is therefore the view of my delegation that the question of East Timor has long ceased to be an issue, since it has been settled in full respect of the right of the people and in full accordance with the United Nations resolutions.

However, as a reflection of its abiding respect for the United Nations, Indonesia is committed to cooperating with the Secretary-General in its efforts to find a just, comprehensive and internationally acceptable solution to the question of East Timor. Contrary to Portugal's unwarranted allegations of "systematic abuses of human rights", the past 20 years of East Timor's integration with Indonesia have reflected development in the province that guarantee that the promotion and protection of human rights, including the right to food, education, health, shelter, religious freedom, the right to vote and the right of assembly, which had been neglected in over four centuries of Portuguese colonial rule of this territory.

As regards the progress in dialogue, the progress report of the Secretary-General on the question of East Timor, contained in document A/51/361 of 16 September 1996, has drawn our attention to the possibility that despite the difficult nature of the task, a just, comprehensive and internationally acceptable solution to the question of East Timor may be within reach. The report, however, suggests that the cooperation and flexibility of the concerned parties will be required to ensure further progress.

Indonesia, for its part, has from the outset demonstrated its sincerity, realism and flexibility during the dialogue. In this context, it should be recalled that in 1986 an overall settlement was almost reached between Indonesia and Portugal, but the Government of Portugal unilaterally withdrew its consent. Furthermore, in 1991, following long and arduous negotiations, both sides agreed to the visit of a Portuguese parliamentary delegation to Indonesia, including East Timor. But time and again, for some groundless reasons, Portugal failed to honour its commitments. Consequently, the progress of the tripartite dialogue slowed down.

In conclusion, Indonesia would like to reiterate its readiness to fully cooperate with the Secretary-General's efforts to find a just, comprehensive and internationally acceptable solution to the question of East Timor.

Mr. Gomersall (United Kingdom): My delegation would like to respond very briefly to certain remarks made by the Foreign Minister of Spain this afternoon concerning Gibraltar.

My delegation has no wish to engage in open polemic with a friendly ally and partner on an issue which can be resolved only by direct talks, such as have already been agreed between our Governments, in the Brussels Declaration of 1984, to which the Foreign Minister referred. In view of what was said, however, it may be necessary to restate the position of my Government, although it is well known to the Government of Spain.

British sovereignty over Gibraltar was clearly established in the Treaty of Utrecht. This legal fact is inconvertible. Furthermore, Britain stands by its commitment to the people of Gibraltar in the preamble to the 1969 Constitution. Her Majesty's Government will not enter into any arrangements under which the people of Gibraltar would pass under the sovereignty of another State against their freely and democratically expressed wishes.

We do not consider that the notion of territorial integrity is at all relevant in this case. I am sure that our Spanish colleague, who exercised his own right of reply last Monday night, understands this position.

There are many issues left over from history which are better resolved by cooperation than by assertions of sovereignty. Nonetheless, we recognize that Spain is Gibraltar's immediate neighbour and we attach importance to continuing dialogue with Spain as a means of overcoming our existing differences.

It is in that framework that my Government and the Government of Gibraltar have been engaged with the Government of Spain in talks to improve cooperation on issues such as drug smuggling in the area and to enable the communities on both sides of the frontier to benefit from free economic relations within the framework of the European communities.

Mr. Chun (Republic of Korea): I have asked to speak in response to North Korea's exercise of the right of reply.

North Korea has made a number of allegations with regard to my country, including personal attacks on my Foreign Minister. I will dwell only on the submarine incident that the North Korean representative referred to at great length.

North Korea claims that this submarine, which was found grounded on the east coast of the Republic of Korea last week, drifted south due to engine trouble while on a routine training mission. This is an absurd fabrication and an outright insult to human intelligence. We are also appalled at North Korea's brazen lack of sincerity and remorse over the incident.

Let me outline a few simple facts which belie the truthfulness of North Korea's claim. To start with, North Korea made this claim five days after the submarine was discovered and only after the loss of 23 lives, including three of our own. These lives could have been saved simply by informing us of the nature of the incident and asking for assistance if it were indeed true that engine trouble caused the submarine to drift into our waters.

A hotline linking Seoul and Pyongyang is actually available for such contingencies. There was a recent instance in which the Republic of Korea Navy rescued and returned a North Korean soldier who had drifted into the Yellow Sea due to flooding. If what North Korea claims is true, there is no reason for it to have taken so long to notify us, given that the lives of 26 officers of its own armed forces were at stake. The findings of the investigation into this incident, and other compelling evidence, also prove that their claim is false.

First, the current of the East Sea would have steered a drifting vessel in a northerly direction, while the North Korean submarine moved southwards, against the current, nearly 60 miles south of the demilitarized zone before running aground at our coast near Kangnung.

Secondly, the submarine never resorted to the well-established procedure of sending out distress signals when it allegedly encountered engine trouble.

Thirdly, the North Korean commandos who disembarked from the submarine and took hostile actions against our armed forces were disguised in Republic of Korea army combat fatigues and were even carrying South Korean weapons. We wonder why they had to wear our army uniforms while on a routine training mission.

Fourthly, there is clear evidence that the submarine's engine had been in perfect functioning condition until the vessel arrived on shore. The broken pieces of the screw blades and rudder of the submarine, as well as the damaged rocks beneath them, indicate that it tried in vain to motor itself out of the rockbed in which it had become lodged.

These objective facts and compelling evidence leave no doubt as to the nature of North Korea's military provocation. The incursion of 26 officers of the North Korean regular armed forces into the South by means of submarine is nothing less than a deliberate act of military provocation, which constitutes a clear and flagrant violation of the Korean Armistice Agreement. As such, it poses a serious threat to peace and security on the Korean peninsula. It is all the more regrettable that North Korea is using fabrications to justify what is unjustifiable.

We would remind the North Korean authorities that they alone are responsible for the consequences of this act of military provocation.

Mr. Catarino (Portugal): In reply to the exercise of the right of reply by the representative of Indonesia, I want to reiterate that, according to United Nations General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, East Timor is considered a Non-Self-Governing Territory. As far as East Timor is concerned, the decolonization process has not yet been completed.

Portugal has no claim — I repeat; no claim — regarding the territory of East Timor. But it has the duty of responsibility, based on historical, moral and juridical grounds, to ensure that the legitimate rights of the East Timorese people are recognized, in accordance with international law and the United Nations Charter.

That is why we are committed to a constructive dialogue with Indonesia under the auspices of the Secretary-General. We support this dialogue and I would once again like to express our hope that we will be able to achieve some progress in concrete terms towards a just, comprehensive and internationally acceptable settlement.

Mr. Kim Chang Guk (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): We cannot show any respect to Mr. Ro-Myung Gong, the so-called Foreign Minister of South Korea, as he is one of the organizers of the killing of our people in South Korea. The world is witnessing once again the beastliness and savageness of the South Korean authorities. The South Korean authorities, having killed the conspirators, can fabricate whatever they like as long as our submarine and personnel are kept on their side.

In South Korea, the people say that the South Korean authorities can do anything they like except transform a man into a woman and a woman into a man.

Once again, I warn the South Korean authorities that, as victims, we have the right to retaliate against the offenders. Our retaliation may be 100-fold or 1,000-fold. No matter what form the retaliation will take, the South Korean puppets will be wholly to blame.

Mr. Ibrahim (Indonesia): In response to the statement just made by the delegation of Portugal, I merely wish to remind the Assembly that Portugal irresponsibly abandoned East Timor after the chaos instigated by Portugal itself. My delegation is of the view that today's statement was merely a repetition of those made previously, and does not warrant any further response, since our position on the matter is well known.

Mr. Kim Chang Guk (Republic of Korea): I have nothing to add to what my delegation has already said in response to the rather amusing allegations made by the North Korean representative. I only remind the delegation of North Korea that the North Korean authorities cannot run away from their responsibilities with false allegations. The facts speak for themselves.

Mr. Catarino (Portugal): Again I would like to stress that the contents of the Indonesian statements cannot hide the essential facts and the prevailing situation in East Timor. Nor can a period of more than 20 years suppress or erase the aspirations and rights of more than 700,000 East Timorese. We sincerely hope that Indonesia, like other countries since the end of the cold war, will understand the new trends in the world.

For our part, we stand ready, as I have already stated, to seek a just, comprehensive and internationally acceptable settlement. We will continue to work in good faith and patiently towards that goal in the framework of the talks under the auspices of the Secretary-General.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.